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ABSTRACT

This literature-based paper attempts to delineate the role of various groups in controlling special education in public schools. The paper argues that historically education has been a local matter, but contemporary interpreation tends to view education as a societal issue, a view which provides the impetus for education to become a state function accompanied by vanishing local control. The paper then proposes that special education be controlled by a partnership of governmental agencies, state boards of education, local boards of education, parents, special education professional organizations, special education teachers, and school administrators. The suggested role of each group in the partnership is outlined. Recommendations are provided to local school boards to enable them to more fully exercise their role in the education of handicapped children. The recommendations include, among others, establishing a local partnership, developing an advisory board, clarifying special education legislation, ensuring a climate of quality control, and seeking modifications of funding formulas. (JDD)

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CONTROL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Local control of education, including special education, has always been one of America's most valued hallmarks. The concept of local control is more than a rich tradition; it is part of the American free enterprise system. Periodically, this concept is tested, usually by well-meaning groups in the spirit of improving educational services.

Under the banner of equality of educational opportunity, the federal government took an aggressive approach to testing this concept during the period of 1955 to 1980. Perhaps the most tangible evidence is Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975. This federal government intervention of local school control was designed to provide an equitable educational opportunity for all handicapped children. The impact of the law on the delivery of educational services to handicapped students remains an issue among educators. According to Thompson (1985, 50), PL 94-142 has seriously affected the accountability of the school community in carrying out its responsibility. On the other hand, there are those who applaud the law as the guarantor of a basic right of each individual, an education.

Though the law was never intended to be the sole standard for program development, many school communities implemented the law in this context. They simply did not go beyond the principle of compliance (Cuban, 1984, 214). Such letter-of-the-law programs tend to promote stagnation and mediocrity. Where there exists an absence of local development beyond compliance, the school community has conceded to

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federal control. Whether by design or default, such a concession leads to a lack of local control of education.

The earlier emphasis on equality has since yielded to an emphasis on quality, which has typified the educational reform movement of the 80's. Accompanying this transition was the change from federal-level dominance of educational reform to state-level dominance. The trend toward state control of education had already started early in the 70's, during the accountability movement (Pipho, 1986, K2). It was also during this period that financial subsidy shifted, in large part, from federal to state. The interaction of these three aspects: educational reform, accountability, and financial subsidy, gave new meaning to the role of the state in educational control. Since, credence has been given to the notion that education is a state responsibility, favored with local control.

Shannon (1985, 497), past head of the National School Board Association, indicates that reports of the demise of local control in American school systems are exaggerated. Those who believe that American schools have been blemished due to a reduction in local control do not understand the role of local boards in educational policy. The local school board is not the sole determiner of educational policy. State initiatives and local control should be viewed as partners. Each has a legitimate role in educational governance, and they are complementary, not competitive (Shannon, 1985, 498, 500). Clinton (1986, 212) suggests that the important task is to sort out the responsibilities between the state and local agencies, relative to the control and delivery of educational services. In the absence of such sorting, it is possible that the revolution which has recently taken place in Texas may spill over into other states - that in which

the citizens have surrendered total control over the education of their children to state officers (Killian, 1984, 193).

Increasingly, the public is viewing education as a societal issue, not merely a local matter. Given this support of the public, along with the sanction of the federal government and the non aggressive posture of school community leaders (Danzberger, 1987, 54), it is not surprising that state policy makers have asserted their leadership. There is little doubt that education is fast becoming a state function, accompanied by vanishing local control. The classic lines between federal, state, and local control have blurred. The problem, therefore, is neither the role which the federal government has assumed (in the spirit of equality) nor the role which the state has assumed (in the spirit of quality and accountability); but the role which the school community may not have assumed in the educational partnership.

This problem is compounded in the area of special education, since the calls for educational reform which have dominated the literature during the mid 80's, have been silent in mentioning special education (Shevin, 1987, 295). One might conclude from this silence that special education may be bypassed during the current reform movement. Or, one may view handicapped students as members of the larger pool to whom society is responsible. The writer of this document has elected to take the latter view, particularly with the emphasis which has been placed in the reform movement, on meeting individual needs (a logical extension of the Individualized Education Plan, which is mandated in PL 94-142). However, some aspects of the reform movement appear to run counter to the inherent nature of special education programs; therefore, generalizing from general education to special education must be done with some caution. For example, attention to the needs of low achieving students runs counter to the emphasis on high standards. And, special education

constitutes a form of tracking, which is deplored in the educational reform movement (Shevin, 1987, 305).

Accompanying the void of special education in the reform movement is a void of literature regarding the governance of special education. Therefore, the writers have extrapolated from the literature on general education. It is left to the reader to judge their relationship.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document attempts to delineate, in part, the role of various groups in controlling special education. Additionally, this document is intended to provide recommendations to local school boards, which might enable them to more fully exercise their role in the education of their handicapped children.

It is not the intent of this document to prescribe a remedy; rather, to provide recommendations for consideration. The recommendations contained herein do not constitute an exhaustive list of alternatives. A bibliography has been provided.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

WHO CONTROLS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Educational policy in the United States has been determined in the past by many groups, in a haphazard manner (Conant, 1985, 112). The only constant which has been honored, is that the education enterprise is a political system. Though not engaged in partisan politics, education is not exempt from the political process (Tracy, 1987, 223). It is generally accepted that education is a national concern, a state responsibility, and a local function.

No single group controls education to the exclusion of the others, thus instilling a system of checks and balances (Shannon, 1985, 498). In addition to the three tiers of government, groups such as the education profession and special interest groups have sought or been given some measure influence, if not control.

What follows are the various groups who currently control education, as revealed in the literature. In that special education is part of the larger educational enterprise, information on the latter has been included in this document. It is left to the reader to judge the relationship. No attempt has been made to prioritize the controlling groups or to judge their effectiveness.

Federal Government

Though outside constitutionality, the federal government has enacted much legislation which has established curricula and programs. And, unless involvement of the federal government is prohibited by an act, there will continue to be involvement. The fact that the Department of Education has not disappeared from the federal government suggests that some role in education is here to stay (Doyle and Hartle,

1985, 6-10). While it is clear that a federal role will be sustained, it is not clear what form this will take, since there does not exist an explicit statement of the role of the federal government in educational policy. In general, the federal government has sought to bring about educational development and improvement through five avenues:

> legislated acts emphasizing civil rights to insure equal opportunity in education (e.g. PL 94-142, Title IX);
>
> legislated programs for special interest groups, which are optional and self-terminating (e.g. at-risk students, minority, handicapped);
>
> persuasive use of leadership to stimulate state and local activity, thus insuring that education is part of the free market system and insuring "consent of the governed;"
>
> judicial activity to guarantee individual rights;
>
> advocacy role in educational issues of nation-wide concern; and
>
> funding of education-related research.

The pattern of funding education by the federal government during the past thirty years has been both shallow and erratic. Between 1960 and 1980, the amount more than doubled (3.9% vs 8.7%), followed by a decline (1983 - 6.8%). This pattern accompanied a steady increase in funding at the state level during the same year intervals (31.1%, 41.5%, 43.3%), and a steady decrease in funding at the local level (52.8%, 38.5% 38.1%) (Hanushek, 1986, 1143). A believer of the adage, "he who pays the piper calls the tune" would suggest that the above funding trends are indicative of the level of educational decision making. Shannon (1985, 498-99) indicates that this is a myth, and that it is wrong to draw a relationship between financing of schools and governance of schools. Bell, on the other hand (1986, 488), related that his first orders as Secretary of the newly created Department of Education were

to reduce federal spending for and control in education, and simultaneously strengthen state and local control.

In general, national interest in education tends to be brief, whether its interest is legislative or advocacy in nature. It is generally what happens as a spin off of national interest which makes an impact on education. The spin offs are generally characterized by an aggressive response from the state governments and by hyped media attention. The former motivates state activity and the latter engages the public interest. Both ultimately result in increased state control, which will be discussed later.

There is an exception to this spin-off syndrome, however. There appears to be little evidence that states have taken up the cause for special education. Rather, there exists a mentality that PL 94-142 is the exclusive determinant of educational policy for the handicapped.

Creators of PL 94-142 did not specify how the program was to be carried out in individual cases, perhaps because curriculum services for handicapped children can not be uniformly prescribed. What was mandated was a process, not a curriculum; a process which guarantees equity and due process. It was the spirit of the law that the curriculum would be hand tailored at the local level to meet the individual needs (Singer, 1985, 47). The literature reveals few initiatives at the state and/or local levels which would help insure state and local control of special education.

National Education Critics

Apart from the government are individuals and nation-wide groups which seek to prescribe remedies for what they perceive as a faulting school system. The current educational reform movement is founded, in large part, on the concurrent efforts of several individuals and groups.

Perhaps the most visible of the efforts are the Carnegie Task Force and the Holmes Group. It is of interest that neither report suggested a role for the federal government in carrying out their proposals, even though many of the issues are national in scope.

This message suggests that educational reform (or education for that matter) is not a function of the federal government. And in the absence of an alternative nation-wide governance body to shepherd the cause, efforts by groups such as the Carnegie Task Force and Holmes Group stand as recommendations, without governmental clout. However, given the forward momentum of educational reform, it is clear that documents emanating from such groups represent a viable force in controlling education.

However unfortunate, these reform documents from the two groups identified above fail to address the needs of the handicapped. And perhaps as an aftermath, subsequent efforts by the states and local school communities have failed to address educational reform in special education.

The question of dual control of education may well be the issue of the 90s. Why is it that the federal government exercises control over the education of special populations (e.g. at-risk, handicapped, minorities) and the state and local sectors exercise control over the education of general populations?

State Government

The state government is legally charged with the responsibility for public education (Riley, 1986, 219). It is the business of each state to establish the basic framework for operating its schools, for providing a major share of the financing, and for monitoring an equitable and effective educational program throughout the state (Shannon, 1985, 499). Probably the most prominent feature of

education control during the past twenty years has been that states are exercising their legal control of education. The press to centralize decision making at the state level is clearly a trend (Frymier, 1986, 647). This trend is nation-wide, with the only differences being the level of aggressiveness and the degree of control by each state.

The movement toward greater state control was sparked and fueled by several factors:

> the conscious move by the federal government to decentralize control and funding of education at the state level;
>
> the conscious move to increase state funding and at the same time decrease local funding;
>
> the ever expanding role of the states to deal with such issues as civil rights and resource equalization;
>
> the nation-wide educational reform movement (Frymier, 1986, 646);
>
> the realization that local control of education to serve a mobile citizenry is not justified;
>
> the need to not only monitor local school community efforts but to take over when a school district is declared educationally bankrupt (Alexander, 1986, 202; Riley, 1986, 219; Kean, 1986, 207). New Jersey has recently passed a school take-over bill (70, p B2);
>
> the perceived lack of initiative and/or power at the local level and in professional organizations, and a lack of organized resistance to state initiatives on the part of these groups (Kirst, 1984, 191; Shannon, 1985, 499);
>
> the vocal support of the National Education Association; and
>
> the initiative of some states. Leading the cause was California with its passage in 1976-77 of minimum competency testing, and later requirements for specific subjects (Evans, 1985, 502). Texas has centralized its decision-making process at the state level, which has intruded on local authority (Shannon, 1985, 499). While claiming not to change the balance of power between state and local control, New York proceeded to mandate instructional policies (Ambach, 1984, 202). Other states have

since followed, including Illinois. While stopping short of mandating state-wide learner outcomes, Illinois does have a state-wide assessment program.

That the state governments have become the most important figures in educational policy making, has not been an accident. The governors and law makers have been aggressive in taking the leading role, without resistance and with support. Poll after poll of public opinion throughout the United States have indicated that people want local control (Shannon, 1985, 499). Yet, in the most recent Gallup Poll (19th), the desire of the public for minimal state standards superseded concern for local control. Also, while the public generally disapproved of intrusion by the federal government (1986 Gallup Poll), in 1987, 74% supported national testing for students (Gallup and Clark, 1987, 23).

Specific to special education, in the summer of 1985, the Illinois legislature approved a reform package, including a program for handicapped students from birth to age three and a requirement for local districts to set learning objectives for each student. While one might assume that this action would provide an impetus for other states to follow, the literature does not reveal any outpouring of state initiatives in the area of special education. This is particularly surprising, given the rising number of students who are classified as special education students.

State Boards of Education

It appears that state boards of education have been less influential in making state-wide policy decisions in education than any other state official or group (e.g. governor, legislature). They have even been less influential than the state teachers' union (McGonagill, 1987, 65). Their lack of involvement is attributed to their intended delegation of policy-making responsibility to local boards.

The demands of the reform-movement, however, have brought about new expectations of state boards of education. Their broad range of powers includes review of existing regulations, assessment of the quality of education, reporting the status of education, acting in an advocacy role for public education, and engaging in strategic planning (Cohen, 1987, 63). The extent of participation depends on the aggressiveness of the state board to dictate to and influence state legislators and to provide leadership to local boards of education. Their participation also depends on the expectation which local boards have of their state parent group. The nature of the partnership between state and local boards with respect to educational policy appears to be weak, no less unclear.

Local School Boards

The era of state government control has been paralleled by an era of reduced local control. Some reasons are presented in the section, State Government.

While local control of public education is the hallmark of a free society, it is probable that this hallmark may not be retrievable in the United States. In principle, few individuals waiver from the soundness of local control (Bacharack and Conley, 1986, 643); however in practice, most local school communities are generally disengaged from educational policy. In a report on the changing balance between state and local power, Kirst (1984, 191) stated that local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and taxpayers are playing purely reactive roles. Kirst suggests that they, along with state boards of education, lack the capacity for policy analysis and development.

In the spirit of insuring some measure of local control, some states have adopted laws designed to decentralize decision making

to the local level. South Carolina's Educational Improvement Act of 1984 mandates that each school board establish an improvement council for each school (Frymier, 1986, 648). Perhaps these states are responding to research which shows a positive correlation between locally determined requirements and levels of student achievement. Locally determined requirements often exceed those at the state level; and there is greater commitment to support home grown requirements (Frymier, 1986, 646). Such actions, however, are in direct opposition to those states which have adopted laws designed to centralize decision making at the state level. Texas HB 246 of 1982, for example, legislates that the primary function of local school boards is to implement state mandates (Killian, 1984, 194).

While encouraging states to be partners in the control of public education, former President Reagan (Gallup and Clark, 1987, 22-23) stated that efforts must be made to restore local governments to their rightful place in the educational process. Specifically, he says, decisions about curricula and academic standards should be made at the local level. Bell (Frymier, 1986, 646) carried this notion one step beyond. He urged legislative leaders (federal and state) to pass legislation which assigns local school boards the responsibility to developmentally attain the level of student performance expected by the state, rather than merely implement the expectations of the state. Unfortunately, few governors and legislators responded to his urging. The result is that most reform initiatives do not include local school boards (Danzberger, 1987, 53), and local school boards have taken on the roles of consultant and implementor.

Parents

Parent participation in American public schools is not new. Traditionally, parents have shared in classroom responsibilities, served on school boards, and served on parent organizations, to mention a few. With the passage of PL 94-142, parents were given a new role by the federal government - that of being a partner in the development of individual education plans of handicapped children. In many schools this role is a reality; in some schools this role is perfunctory.

Within the past decade, parental pressure for more significant involvement in the schools has been evidenced (Johnston and Slotnik, 1985, 430). Parents are serving as advocates of special interest groups, representing the tax payers perspective, supporting statewide and nationwide reform movements, and insisting on a greater voice in developing educational policy. This renewed parent participation appears to be most visible at the state level, rather than at the local level. Parents are actively lobbying state legislators, who in turn have generally been sensitive to their voices.

One explanation which may account for the lack of substantial participation in the local school community is that a large majority of parents do not have children currently in the schools. In Illinois, 78% of the adult population in 1986 had no children in school. In the United States this figure is 73% (Cardenas and First, 1985, 7). Based on public opinion polls, this group is the most skeptical of the school-communities ability to deliver educational services (Bakalis, 1986, 12), and the group indirectly controls the agenda of the school through taxes.

One might generalize that parent involvement in educational decision making at the local level is expressed largely through tax-related decisions. Beyond this, their interest has been directed at the state level.

Professionals and Professional Organizations

According to the literature, teachers are rarely involved in decision making within a school district (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 643). This lack of involvement may be attributed to several factors, among them being:

> the public has not sanctioned teachers as professionals, regardless of their competence (Shannon, 1985, 499);
>
> teachers have not been perceived as educational leaders (Doyle and Hartle, 1985, 22); instead leadership has been aligned with state officials and school administrators. As an example, the recent Education Reform Package of Illinois established the school principal as the instructional leader;
>
> while intending to protect the role of teachers in educational decision making, the movement toward collective bargaining by some professionals may have had the effect of discrediting them as educational leaders (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 643; Pipho, 1986, K2). In New York, professionals are attempting to negotiate a plan which would require school principals to engage teachers in instructional issues, giving ultimate veto power to teachers (Beating Back..., 1987, 74);
>
> well meaning principals have shielded teachers from outside pressures. As a result, local boards and community members have not viewed teachers as active participants in educational decision making (Wilson and Rassmar, 1985, 711); and
>
> the stronghold of state control of public education has distanced teachers from the real decision makers.

A discussion regarding professionals must include professional organizations. According to Kirst (1984, 190), organizations of professional educators are calling only for marginal change. And their change is not directed toward engaging professionals as primary actors in educational reform. The National Education Association did urge the involvement of school boards; however reference to involvement of professionals was absent.

The lack of participation by professionals in educational decision making was reinforced by many states, which left professional education groups out of their reform movement. Such was the case in Illinois.

Other Sources of Control

Control of education and special education comes from many other sources. Their influence may be direct or indirect, and may be local or national in scope. Among the prevailing sources are: textbook publishers, employers, higher education, and the courts.

Publishers of textbooks have a stronghold in shaping education, particularly in states which have adopted state-wide textbooks. According to a recent poll commissioned by the National Education Association, 63% of the public believe that teachers should have more control in selecting textbooks (Poll..., 1988, 8). Currently a federally funded project involves the review of textbooks suitable for special education students (What Are..., 1987, 31).

Increasingly, employers play a role in determining educational policy. Justified by their need to have a skillful workforce, their support for education has extended to curricular reform (Anderson, 1987, 53). Transition programs in special education which seek to bridge the gap between the education program and community employers is an example of an employer-driven curriculum. The same effect has resulted from college entrance requirements established by institutions and boards of higher education.

In the interest of enforcing laws and preserving freedoms, educational policy and practice have been molded by the courts (Prasse, 1988, 307). One might question the place of the judiciary in shaping education through litigation. Nevertheless such activity is at the will of the parent and public.

WHO SHOULD CONTROL SPECIAL EDUCATION?

During the past three decades there have evolved several different interpretations as to what groups control public education in general, and special education in particular. There is no common interpretation. Variances exist among states, between philosophy and practice, among individuals and groups, between general education and special education, and over time.

Simultaneously sparked by several groups, there is an interest in clarifying which groups should make policy decisions in education and, more specifically, in special education. Conant (1985, 112) has called for a nation-wide policy (not national policy), which would provide the clarity. To date, short of Bell's unsuccessful efforts to clarify the federal role in education during his term as Secretary of the Department of Education, there is no evidence of such an effort. Relative to special education, the Heritage Foundation (a national public policy research institute) suggested as one of its twenty-one initiatives for education, that the President should appoint a commission to study and make a recommendation regarding what constitutes a proper education for handicapped children, and who has primary responsibility for this education.

With consideration to the historical interpretation that education is a local matter and to the contemporary interpretation which places education in the hands of several groups, the writer proposes that special education be controlled by a partnership. This partnership includes governmental agencies, school boards, professional organizations, and teachers.

The suggested role of each group in the special education partnership follows.

Federal Government

insuring equality of opportunity and individual rights;

insuring that education is a state responsibility and local function;

identifying nation-wide education issues and problems;

elevating and sustaining education as a nation-wide priority;

funding education-related research; and

funding education through states.

State Government

developing state-wide goals of education, in cooperation with special education professional organizations, state parent groups, state school board, and the public at large;

providing technical assistance to local school communities;

insuring a quality education for all students, including intervention strategies;

insuring equality of opportunity and individual rights;

elevating and sustaining special education as a state-wide responsibility and priority;

funding education with state and federal monies, supplemented by local funding;

funding programs for special-needs groups, supplemented by local funding (e.g. at-risk, handicapped);

funding school-related research and reporting the status of special education within the state; and

insuring accountability of state goals of education and of state and federal funding.

State Boards of Education

assisting in the development of state-wide goals of education;

advocating on behalf of local school boards, with respect to issues and needs;

elevating special education as a societal priority; and

providing educational leadership for local school boards,

Local Boards of Education

utilizing the state board of education as an advocacy body;

advocating on behalf of parents and adults in the community, with respect to issues and needs;

developing school district goals and outcomes of education in keeping with state goals, in cooperation with special education specialists, parents and adults of the community, and the business/agency sector of the community;

elevating special education as a local priority, a local function, and a state responsibility;

providing educational leadership for the school district (including strategic planning);

providing educational leadership for special education specialists, parents and other adult community members, and the business/agency sector of the community;

insuring a quality education for all students (including curriculum, environment, support systems and intervention strategies);

funding education to supplement state funding (including federal monies), with alternative sources of funding;

funding local research and reporting the status of special education within the district; and

insuring accountability of district goals and outcomes, and accountability of local funding.

Parents

assisting in the development of state-wide goals of education (as public-at-large and state parent groups);

assisting in the development of district goals and outcomes of special education through parent groups, advisory groups, and the local board of education;

participating in the development and delivery of local plans for special education students and other special groups;

utilizing local board of education as an advocacy body;

holding local board of education accountable for its role in public education; and

supporting the local funding of education;

Special Education Professional Organizations

developing professional standards and code of ethics for program development and professional practice in special education;

providing professional standards for the development of state-wide goals of special education;

engaging in accreditation of public school programs (in collaboration with other controlling groups);

engaging in and stimulating research on special education matters;

elevating and sustaining special education as a nation-wide priority; and

advocating on behalf of special educators and handicapped students (to the public, governments, and school boards).

Special Education Specialist

contributing to the development of district goals and outcomes, as the professional and specialist;

providing leadership in the development of the education program for handicapped students, based on the district goals and outcomes and on the letter and spirit of PL d94-142;

consulting the vocational education specialist relative to providing handicapped students equal access to vocational education;

providing leadership in the delivery of the educational plans for handicapped students;

insuring a quality education for handicapped students; and

advocating on behalf of handicapped students needs (to school administrators).

School Administrators

serving as catalysts and support for special education professionals, in the development of district plans and educational curricula;

providing leadership in the implementation of educational programs;

insuring quality control of the special education programs; and

advocating on behalf of professionals, student needs, and funding needs (to local board of education via superintendent).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

One of the purposes of this document is to provide recommendations to local school boards, which might enable them to more fully exercise their role in the education of handicapped children. The suggested role of the school board in educational decision making and in delivering educational services has been defined in the context of contemporary times. This role is presented elsewhere in this report.

What follows are recommendations for consideration by local school boards. The recommendations are presented in the context that local school boards have a right and responsibility for educational decision making. Schools should not be targets for change, they should be arenas of change.

The recommendations do not represent an exhaustive list, and they are intended to be modified to fit the unique circumstances of schools and/or handicapped student groups. No priority is intended.

Establish a Local Partnership

Perhaps the most dominant theme among the research on effective schools is that of shared governance. The notion of a partnership is not new. Witness the school-community partnerships in the areas of cultural and athletic activities. However unfortunate, involvement at the academic level has not been as prominent.

A partnership among the local, state, and national levels is increasingly accepted. Included in this partnership are the federal and state governments, the state board of education, the professional leaders, and the school-community sector. The partnership would develop the state's plan for special education. In turn, the plan would provide a base for more specific community planning. The

suggested role of each, as generated from the literature, is identified in the section, Who Should Control Special Education.

Kentucky has led the way in state-local partnerships with its Kentucky Education Foundation, established in 1984. The foundation was established to improve the involvement of school communities in education (McDonald, 1986, 752).

A partnership among those involved in governance at the local level is less common. The literature varies considerably regarding the value of a partnership and the role each group should play. This is compounded by the variance in the amount of support given by each group to federal and state participation (Elam, 1987, 294-96).

Unless there is a unified partnership at the local level, the potential clout at that level will not be realized. Therefore, it is recommended that the local school board take the lead in formalizing a partnership among all groups which have a governance role. Included would be the board itself, the special education specialist/teacher, parents and other community groups, and business and industry. The suggested roles are identified in the section, Who Should Control Special Education. It should be noted that school administrators (e.g. principal, curriculum coordinator) play a facilitating role to the partnership, specifically to the special education specialist/teacher. In addition to being accountable for their respective roles, each would serve a check and balance function on its counterparts.

Clarify the Role of School Employees

The role of each has been presented in the section, Who Should Control Special Education. However, the relationship between the school administrators and the special education specialists may need additional clarity.

Clearly, the responsibility for curriculum development and academic policies rests, in the area of special education, with the special education specialists/teachers. Of course these decisions are made in the context of federal and state laws, statewide goals, and local and school goals. As a professional, the teacher brings to bear the professional research and standards along with specific academic preparation in the field.

The responsibility of school administrators (e.g. principals, curriculum coordinator) is that of leadership (Clinton, 1986, 209). They marshall the efforts of the teachers by serving as catalysts; providing support services; interfacing with the local board of education, parents, and community members (through the superintendent); and administering the curriculum and policies. The administrators, as well as the local school board, must recognize and support the expertise of professional personnel and protect the teachers' responsibility for curriculum and academic policy development, as well as their right to teach Tanner, 1987, 33).

In the past, reformers have had a blind spot with regard to the role which professionals play in shaping educational policy. In spite of this, school administrators have managed to protect the teachers' responsibilities. In other schools, teachers have been imaginative in preserving their autonomy (Cuban, 1986, 9). In still others, the teachers have relinquished their responsibility or have succumbed to top-down decision making. More recent reformers have put the

teachers' role back in perspective. They are calling for teachers to exercise greater responsibility in academic decision making and are calling for state and local groups to exercise a greater degree of trust in professionals. They assert that teachers should not be held accountable without authority (Doyle and Hartle, 1985, 22). Simultaneously, they have called for increased leadership by school administrators. This leadership is interpreted as leading others in decision making. Since the principals are considered the pivotal persons in schools to bring about educational changes, one of the greatest challenges is to strengthen their leadership skills (Clinton, 1986, 208).

Develop a Task Force on Parent and Community Participation

Local school boards have a responsibility to develop strategies for greater and more effective involvement of parent groups and community groups (Cardenas and First, 1985, 8). Schools are required to involve parents in the planning of programs for severely handicapped students. Surveys indicate that up to half of the parents are disengaged (Meyers and Blacher, 1987, 441). The purpose of the task force is to enable initiatives by the members. These initiatives would be relative to determining their role in educational governance, determining what avenues will be used to carry out their role (e.g. advisory boards, interagency advisory group committees, forums), and determining parent and community positions on educational matters. In situations in which parents and community members serve on a school-community advisory board but who are not as effective as desired, or in situation in which an advisory board has not yet been established, a task force would be beneficial.

In one of the recent Gallup Polls, 45% of the respondents indicated that parents should have more say in the school curriculum (Gallup and Clark, 1987, 21). In the absence of strategies for greater involvement

at the local level, parents and community members are apt to increasingly seek involvement at the state level, thus weakening local control. Already states are engaging parents in a variety of ways, often bypassing the local boards of education.

Develop a Special Education Advisory Board

To insure a school-community partnership, it is recommended that an ongoing program advisory board be established and engaged. Such a board should play an active role in defining program goals, preparing curricula, establishing student performance standards, participating in interagency cooperation, and enabling transitional programs with agencies and employers. Other responsibilities include public relations, interaction with legislators, and community participation (Wehmeier, 1987, 17).

Empower the State Board of Education

To enable a state-wide perspective while emphasizing local control, the state board of education should be empowered and charged by the local boards. Representing local boards, this parent body should seek to influence the state's educational decision making. As recently happened in Texas, members of the state board should not be appointed. State-appointed members tends to result in a loss of direct accountability to local constituents (Killian, 1984, 195).

Clarify the Special Education Legislation

While PL 94-142 was intended to insure individualized education for the handicapped, its focus was on establishing a process which would insure this. It remains the responsibility of the special educators to provide the leadership in the development of the curricular aspect of the plan. The plan should insure that the spirit of the law be met as well as the letter of the law.

Seek Clarity on the Place of Special Education in the Educational Reform Movement

Through the state board of education, the local board must seek the place of special education in the reform movement. The board must aggressively assert the inclusion of special education at the state level. The dual system of control, whereby the federal government oversees special education and the state government oversees general education, is incongruous.

Clarify the Special Education Students

The boundaries of the special education categories have shifted so markedly in response to legal, economic, and political forces, that clarifying who is to be served is difficult (Reynolds, Wang and Walberg, 1987, 396). To accept the categories and accompanying policies without reviewing them in light of individual needs is short-sighted. The education reform movement needs a child-based focus as well as a law-based focus (Greer, 1988, 392).

This shifting of boundaries is compounded by the fact that the disadvantaged student group, including the handicapped, is the fastest-growing student population among all student groups (Riley, 1986, 217). It was estimated that in 1987, 15% of the children who began their formal schooling in the United States would be physically or mentally handicapped (Feichtner and Sarkees, 1987, 22). It behooves local boards to clearly identify who is to be served, by aggressively helping to provide boundary clarity.

Develop District Goals and Student Outcomes

As an extension of federal and state mandates, local school boards should establish measurable learning outcomes for all students within the district. Special education must be viewed as part of this total education plan, not something which is separate from (Lilly, 1987, 325). The outcomes for the handicapped students should reflect individual education needs rather than mere eligibility in special programs (Stainback and Stainback, 1987, 66); and should include a transition component. In addition to involving the public, the board should prevail heavily upon the special education teacher in fulfilling this task.

Develop a Local Special Education Plan

This plan is an extension of the state's plan, which should contain:

> an agreement between vocational education and special education;
>
> a model local program which could be adapted, including referral services, eligibility requirements, support services, responsibilities of personnel, financial arrangements, and an assessment component; and
>
> a plan for inservice education (Feichtner and Sarkees, 1987, 23).

The local plan should be part of the total education plan of the district, and would be developed by the local partnership. It would be based on individual education needs and would include a transitional component.

Focus the Agenda of the Local School Board

The school board should invest most of its time and energy to educational issues. Such a commitment is essential if the board seeks to act out its authority over its own education program. In a survey of 500 school board chairs (Danzberg, 1987, 55, 59), 55% said that

their agenda are directed by state initiatives. One conclusion is that unless school boards establish their own initiatives, they cannot expect to be given their rightful place in educational control.

Instill a Climate of Quality and Quality Control

Nothing will aid the reform movement more than quality efforts at the local level. Some of the more obvious ones follow.

> Faculty development, administrator development and local school board development are essential ingredients to quality (Pipho, 1986, 644; Clinton, 1986, 208; Institute..., 1987, 6-8).
>
> The school board should attract and keep specialists (e.g. special education specialist) who are not merely doers, but who are enablers (Eagleton, 1985, 16). The special education program must not be developed and delivered by the specialist, apart from enabling the involvement of the partnership.
>
> The school board should attract and keep well-prepared and highly-motivated teachers (Doyle and Hartle, 1985, 25) who have the capacity for ongoing curriculum development and who are professionally attuned.
>
> The school board should hire administrators who exercise quality leadership (Doyle and Hartle, 1985, 24) and engage in effective supervision (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 644).
>
> The schoolboard should assess its effectiveness in a systematic manner. A self assessment package is available from the Institute for Educational Leadership (Denzberger, 1987, 59).
>
> Mutual accountability among all governance partners is essential (McGonagill, 1987, 68). Holding one another accountable is an accepted mode of operation at the local level of governance.

Review the Research on Effective Teaching and Effective Schools

Research reveals several factors which relate to effective schooling. School boards might review the findings before engaging in school reform at the local level. Some of these follow.

> Effective schools involve parents in their children's learning, through communication and shared governance (Stedman, 1987, 219).
>
> In effective schools, individual schools have a measure of autonomy (Frymier, 1986, 648); and what happens in the classroom is the key to success (Riley, 1986, 218). Literature on effective schools suggests that important changes take place when those responsible for each school are given more responsibility than less (Kirst, 1984, 191).
>
> A strong, local school improvement effort (to accompany state effort) is more consistent with school improvement than a top-down effort (Cuban, 1984, 214).
>
> Conditions at the state level which are critical for successful changes are:
>
> > state pressure, including monitoring, discretionary money to local districts, collegial relationship with local personnel, and technical assistance to develop local capacity (Anderson and Odden, 1986, 580-81; Kirst, 1984, 191).
>
> In an effective system of school management, and administrators experience a culture of cooperation (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 645).
>
> In an effective school organization, there is emphasis on consensus building (through diversity) and a mutual understanding of goals (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 643).
>
> Effective schools have administrative leaders who use positive supervisory behaviors, including a process for evaluation (Clinton, 1986, 208; Bacbarach and Conley, 1986, 644).
>
> Effective schools emphasize faculty development (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 644), administrator development (Clinton, 1986, 208), and school board development (Institute..., 1987, 6-8).
>
> According to the U.S. Department of Educations Secondary Schools (Wilson and Ressmar, 1986, 708), the best schools are those which have collaborative links with their community, as evidenced through mutual sharing. It is not a matter of the community being drawn into the life of the school, it is the reverse.

> Successful decision making results from a decentralized approach and shared decision making (Frymier, 1986, 208).
>
> School which are governed effectively have clarity on the relationship between the local board and the superintendent (Danzberger, 1987, 58).

Engage in Strategic Planning

Drawing upon an adage, unless there exists a plan, how will one know where he is going and when he gets there? Having primary responsibility for educational leadership at the local level, the local board is expected to engage in strategic planning (Bacharach and Conley, 1986, 645; Institute..., 1987,7). In turn, this plan provides a framework for curriculum development by the professionals, and drives the actions of school administrators. The strategic plan should include action strategies, a timeline, a program-driven budget, an assessment component, a reporting component, and a mediating component. The special education specialist, representatives of social agencies, medical personnel, and the business sector should all be involved in planning for handicapped children.

Create a Public Awareness

It is incumbent upon the local board to elevate the publics' interest in education, to promote an understanding of the board's role (Danzberger, 1987, 56-58), and to inform them regarding the status of the local educational enterprise. Media coverage, school report cards, and achievement reports of the board are examples of avenues to create public awareness.

Create a Data Base Regarding Outcomes of Special Education Program

There is a need for local school boards to collect data concerning the effects which school reform strategies have on special education students. In addition to reporting these data to the community, the data can be used to influence legislation, funding, and the governance of special education.

Seek Modifications in the Current Funding Formula

The local board should seek a modification which would enable a transition program and interagency planning to be part of the current funding umbrella (Reynolds, Wang and Walberg, 1987, 498). This would help enable intended outcomes of special education - to acquire skills and experiences which enable one to live successfully in one's community and which lead to employment. Currently, state and local agencies are faced with directives to provide transition-related programs for the handicapped, as part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1984 (Sect. 102) and the Revised Education Act (Sect. 218).

Additionally, the local board may wish to seek a modification which would permit reimbursement for special education services according to actual costs rather than categorical headcount (Wang, Rubenstein and Reynolds, 1985, 66). Such a modification could include the costs associated with mainstreaming.

Develop a Plan of Creative Funding

It has been projected that in the near future, federal support for schools will continue to decrease, state support will stabilize or decrease, and local support will increase. Increasingly, some of the state funding will be used for special purposes, such as incentives for improvement (Augenblick, 1984, 201). The local board may want to seek special funding from local sources (e.g., social agencies,

business and industry) and from educational foundations (Nesbit, 1987, 23). Such funding would be in addition to the ongoing sources and would be used for time-laden projects. For the Chicago public schools, the Joyce Foundation has agreed to award $10,000 grants to those who devise the best programs for revamping the school system, to include the partnership of teachers, parents, and community members (Foundation..., 1988, 5).

In addition to the donor funds as addressed above, local school boards might investigate donor funds in the form of goods and services, enterprise activities (e.g. leasing, user fees), and partnerships (e.g. bus sharing, facility sharing). If used to the fullest, it is estimated that an enhanced school budget would not exceed 9% (Odden, 1986, 340).

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ABSTRACT

CONTROL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Increasingly, the public is viewing education as a societal issue, not merely a local matter. This support, along with the aggressive role of the federal government and the non-aggressive posture of school community leaders, has provided the impetus for state policy makers to assert their role in controlling education. Education is fast becoming a state function accompanied by vanishing local control. This problem is pronounced in the area of special education.

This paper attempts to delineate the current role of variuos groups in controlling special education in public schools: federal government, national education critics, state government, state boards of education, local school boards, parents, professionals and professional organizations, and other less obvious groups.

With consideration to the historical interpretation that education is a local matter and to the contemporary interpretation which places education in the hands of several groups, the paper proposes that special education be controlled by a partnership. The primary groups are: governmental agencies, state school board, local school board, professional organizations, special education teachers, and school administrators.

The paper concludes with recommendations to local school boards, which might enable them to more fully exercise their right and responsibility in the education of handicapped children. Among the recommendations are: establish a local partnership, clarify the particular role of school employees, develop an advisory board, empower the state board of education, clarify the special education legislation, clarify the categories of special education students, develop program goals and outcomes, insure a climate of quality control, seek modifications of funding formula.